XXII

WINE AND VINEYARDS IN ANCIENT YEMEN

Viticulture in the ancient Near East goes back to prehistory. Drinking wine was known in Egypt and Mesopotamia probably before the beginning of the third millennium B.C., and viticulture in Yemen can also be traced back to very early times. It may have been introduced to Yemen from Syria-Palestine sometime in the second millennium B.C. and seems to have been fully acclimatised from the beginning of the first millennium B.C. It is to be noted that the earliest indication of viticulture was found in upper Mesopotamia, north Syria and south Asia Minor, and several scholars have suggested that this is the original home of the grapevine *(Vitis vinifera)* (Dalman, 1935, IV, p. 291-339; Goor & Nurock, 1968, p. 18-45). Besides Yemen, other places were known for cultivating grapevines in Arabia such as Tabūk, Oman and especially aṭ-Ṭā'if, which was famous for producing wine in the pre-Islamic era. The grapes and raisins of aṭ-Ṭā'if were very well known in the early Islamic period. For the reconstruction of past vegetation there are two main sources of data, namely the botanical remains from archaeological excavations and written documents. This study is based mainly on written documents since there is no accurate research on plant remains in Yemen due to the lack of excavations and little has been done on the study of its agriculture (Grohmann, 1922; Höfner, 1989; Hehmeyer, 1991).

Our information about viticulture and wine in pre-Islamic Arabia is drawn from Arabic sources (Heine, 1982), South Arabian inscriptions, Classical authors and archaeological discoveries. This paper will give a general presentation of wine and vineyards in pre-Islamic Yemen according to the available materials, especially South Arabian inscriptions.

Vineyards

Yemen and aṭ-Ṭā'if have the best climate and are therefore the most suitable places for growing grapevines in Arabia. While vineyards were already widespread in Syria-Palestine in the third millennium B.C., it seems that they spread to Yemen only in the beginning of the first millennium B.C. Grapevines were planted in several regions in Yemen, particularly in the Yemeni highlands such as Šibām/Kawkabān. The most important territories for growing grapevines are situated near Ṣan'ā', such as Banū Ḥušaiš, Banū al-Ḥāriṯ and Ḫaulān, as well as Ṣa'da, Naǧrān, Radā' and Ma'rib. Apparently, the vineyard centers in antiquity have remained throughout the ages and are still centers for cultivating grapevines today (*al-Mawsū'a al-Yamaniyya*, p. 695; Varisco, 1994, 186f).

A vineyard is usually understood as such if it has more than five grapevines planted in it, but a vineyard may have hundreds or thousands. The most common word for vineyard in Arabic is *karm*. The Arabic words *karm* (pl. *kurūm*), which also means « vine, grapes, grapevines, garden, orchard », and *karma* « grapevine, vine » go back to the Canaanite *krm* with the same meaning (Dalman, 1935, IV, p. 291-339). However, the Canaanite *krm* is familiar to all northwest Semitic languages and entered Arabic through Aramaic. The Canaanite word *krm* was also borrowed by the Egyptians with the same meaning (Hoch, 1994, 330f.). Of importance

is the occurrence of *kurūm Šibām* « Vineyards of Šibām/Kawkabān » in the work of the pre-Islamic poet Imru' al-Qays (*Dīwān Imri' al-Qays*, 163). The Arabic word *dāliya* (pl. *dawālī*) also seems to be of Canaanite origin. In Akkadian the word *karānu* means « wine, grapevine, grapes » (*CAD*, K, 202). However, it appears that the viticulture traditions in Yemen were quite different from those of Mesopotamia and Syria-Palestine. This means that the internal development of viniculture which took place in Yemen may be demonstrated here according to the special terms for several kinds of wine and vineyards gained from South Arabian inscriptions (see below). At the same time it should be taken into account that several terms for viticulture in Yemen are common Semitic.

gpn and *dlyt* were the most common words used for « vine, grape » along with *krm* in Syria-Palestine in ancient times. In South Arabia the words that were used for « vine, grapevine » are: *wayn*, *ḥabala* (Al-Selwi, 1987, 66f.), *šaǧarat al-'inab* and *šaǧarat al-ḫamr* (*al-Iklīl* I, p. 27).

The word *ǧafna* (pl. *ǧafanāt*), which is mentioned in Arabic lexicons to be a Yemeni word, seems to be a common West Semitic word since it is attested in Ugarit, Aramaic and Biblical Hebrew (see also Akkadian *gapnu* « tree, fruit tree or vine », *CAD*, G, 44).

We do not have data about names of grapes from the inscriptions, although we do have different names for wine. Meanwhile, it seems that some of the wines carried the same name as the grape itself such as *ġrbb* (see below). Noteworthy is that pre-Islamic Arabs used names for wine according to its color, such as *kumait* « red wine » or to a place such as *bābiliyya* « from Babylon ».

We have some information about wine grapes from Arabic sources. Al-Hamdānī mentions an account of more than nineteen kinds of wine grapes grown in Yemen (al-Iklīl, VIII, 119f; al-Hamdānī, Ṣifa 196; Grohmann, 1922, p. 234-38) while Ibn Rusta states that there were more than seventy kinds of grapes in Yemen (Varisco, 1994, 186f). According to information gained from Arabic Classical sources about practising viticulture in Yemen, there are at least 40 kinds of wine grapes in this country. Some of them are well known in Syria-Palestine, such as *rāziqī*, *šāmī*, *ḥalawānī*, *rūmī*, and might have been introduced to Yemen from there. However, it seems that various kinds of grapes in ancient Yemen were not widely different from those known at the time of al-Hamdānī (10th century A.D.) and in modern times. These grapes are divided into three main groups: white, black and red grapes. All the names of the grapes that were counted by al-Hamdānī or the modern names could be put under these three main categories (*al-Mawsū'a al-Yamaniyya*, p. 695).

The grapes of Arabia are mentioned by Classical authors. Diodorus maintains that the island Panchaia (Soqoṭrā) produced different kind of grapes (V 45/2), and Pliny also mentions the grapes of Arabia (*Naturalis His.*, XIV 20, 122).

The South Arabian inscriptions are the most important sources of our information about vineyards in antique Yemen. Vineyards are attested several times in the inscriptions. But, unfortunately, the inscriptions do not help us draw a picture about methods of growing and cultivating the vine due to their lack of such information. Nevertheless, a careful examination of the evidence in these inscriptions and the combination of data enables us to reconstruct an idea of the vineyards in ancient Yemen. At any rate, we do have some indications about the practice of growing the grapevines in ancient Yemen from proper names. The personal name *wynn* « wine-grower » (*RES* 3902/154) and the tribe name *bny 'ṯkln* are good examples for this (Harding, 1971, p. 407). The word *'ṯkln* means « wine-cluster », which seems to be a

designation for this tribe as wine-growers. Vineyards are always mentioned in a general context such as in dedication inscriptions. Nevertheless, the inscriptions inform us that there were different kinds of vineyards in ancient South Arabia through the use of variant terms, such as *wyn*, *'md*, *ḫblt*, *'nb*. However, the distinction between the different varieties of these terms seems to be very fine in many cases, even obscure. The following is a description of these vineyards.

wyn

The word *wyn* (pl. *'ywn* with a metathesis *w* to *y*, the form *yyn* is also attested, *Sab.Dic.*, 166) means « vineyard » in South Arabian inscriptions (Hommel, 1889, p. 653-63; Nöldeke, 1910, p. 64). In Classical Arabic the word *wayn* means « black grapes » or « white grapes ». This West Semitic word *wyn/yyn* means also « wine ». Apparently the Greek word *oinos* stems from this Semitic word. Of importance is the attestation of *wayn* (pl. *'awyān*) in Ge'ez in the meaning of « vine, wine, grapes » in addition to *'aṣada wayn* « vineyard » (Leslau, 1991, p. 623) and *'awda wayn* (Leslau, 1991, p. 77). Some inscriptions give us information about the cultivation of these vineyards but we still do not have a clear and accurate picture.

The word *wyn* is the most frequently attested term among other vocabularies designating the different kinds of vineyards in South Arabian inscriptions. Sometimes it is mentioned in inscriptions providing no accurate information about the vineyard, *e.g.* *w[y]nhmw* « their vineyard » (*CIH* 11/3). Occasionally the word *wyn* is mentioned in an ambiguous context (*CIH* 522/2-3). A Sabaic inscription mentions that vineyard could have been located near a house as follows: *wyn / ḏḫlf / bythmw* « The vineyard behind their house » (*CIH* 276/3).

Vineyards could have been private property or possessed by a temple. According to a Sabaic inscription, one vineyard seems to have been the property of a temple. This inscription mentions that this vineyard was dedicated to the deity and that the cultivator paid the tithe to the temple (*wyn / y'šrn*, *as-Sawdā'* 52/4-5 = *CIH* 440/4-5). Some people used to grow their vineyards in protection of a deity. A Sabaic inscription states such information as follows: *wrṯd[w] / w[y]nhmw / b'l / bklm / w'b'l / bythmw* « They committed their vineyard in the protection of the Master of Bakīlum and the Masters of their houses (tribes) » (*CIH* 228/2-3).

Sometimes a vineyard is mentioned only in the general context of dedication inscriptions. A Sabaic inscription of that category talks about the safety of the family, the children and the vineyards etc. (*RES* 4057/d, 4; cf. also E 29/2).

There is some data about the irrigation of vineyards, as in the Sabaic inscription *RES* 4196/2. It mentions: *brw'/ whwṯr / whšqr / m'glyhmw / swrm / wyr'ẓ / b'ly / wynhmw / ḏqyln* « They constructed, laid foundations and completed their two cisterns Sawrum and Yar'aẓ in their vineyard, that of the Qayl ». There is no really good information about royal vineyards. However, this inscription informs us that this vineyard was the property of a Qayl.

Terraced vineyards are designated by special terms in the inscriptions. A Sabaic inscription mentions: *'šq / 'ywnhmw* « The terracing of their vineyards » (*RES* 4194/3; *Sab.Dic.*, 21). Such information is also mentioned in a Qatabanian inscription as follows: *'ywnm / ḏkwn / b'šqt* « Vineyards that were in terraces » (*RES* 4230/c 1).

Some vineyards are designated in Sabaic inscriptions by their names. This kind of vineyard seems to be larger and more important since most of them had irrigation systems. The following is a presentation of some of them.

The Sabaic inscription Van Lessen 18 is recorded to have been found in Aryab (Höfner, 1987, 38f; Ghūl, 1993, 167f; Ja 1093; Jamme, 1971, 91f). It gives some information about this subject. The reading and translation of this text are as follows:

1. *hwf'm / ḏ'rgn / hqḥ / wbql / wyn*
2. *hw / ḏ ln / bbḍ' / hgrn / hkr / wmrw*
3. *hw / tgyb/ lhw / wl / ḏ'ḏrhw / 'b'l*
4. *'bythmw / brd' / šmshw / wmnḍ*
5. [*ḥhw*]

Translation

1. Hawf'amm of the (tribe) 'Urğān has constructed his water-system and planted his vineyard
2. Ḏu-Ulān in the vicinity the city Hakar and its irrigation canal
3. Tagyib for himself and his dependents, chiefs
4. of their tribes, with the help of his sun-goddess and his irrigation deity.

The name of the irrigation canal Tagyib may be interpreted according to the Arabic root *ğāba* « to bring ». Moreover, the Sabaic inscription Van Lessen 23/9 states that some people mentioned with their names that they « constructed their irrigation canal for their vineyard *yšgb* » (*w'mlw* [/] *ḥrt / wynhmw / yšgb*) in Wādī Širğān (al-Sheiba, 1987, p. 61).

Another Sabaic inscription refers to irrigation vineyards as follows: *wfdy / yynhmw / 'mn / bny /* ['] *rm / 'bš*[*r*]*n / wbql / w*[*y*]*nhmw / ḏšbzn* « And they redeemed their vineyards from Banū *'rm 'bšrn* and planted their vineyard *ḏšbzn* » (Ist 7630/4-6). The name of the vineyard *ḏšbzn* is be noticed here. Its location is unknown (al-Sheiba, 1987, p. 28).

The Sabaic inscriptions YMN 9 and Gar AY 7 inform us about the construction of water systems for the irrigation of a *wyn*-vineyard. The name of the vineyard in YMN 9/3 is mentioned as *klnm*. Its location is mentioned in the same inscription to be in a Wādī called *srn / rḥbm* and is identified as Qā' al-Mi'sāl (al-Sheiba, 1987, p. 30, 49). *ḏt qrnn* as a name of vineyards (*'ywn*) also appears in a Sabaic inscription. This place is located according to al-Sheiba in the modern place az-Zāhir (Robin-az-Zāhir, 1/3-4; al-Sheiba, 1987, p. 47).

Vineyard is mentioned together with the word *mzr* « wine » in the so-called *suns* hymn, an inscription written on a rock discovered in Wādī Qāniya in the region of as-Sawādiyya ('Abdallāh, 1988, p. 81-100). The words are found in line 13: *wyn / mzr / kn / kšqḥk* « Your shining caused the vineyard to become wine ».

'md

The word *'md* (pl. *''md*) means « vineyard » in South Arabian inscriptions (*Sab.Dic.*, 16). It derives from a root *'md* (see Arabic *'amada* to support, to intend, see further *'amad* « support », *'imād* « pole, column »). There is dispute among authorities as to the accurate meaning of *'md* (*Sab.Dic.*, 16; Biella, 1982, 370f). One of its possible meanings is « irrigated

land » (*Sab.Dic.*, 16). However, *'md* with the meaning « support for vines, vine-stocks » is also plausible (*Sab.Dic.*. 16; Beeston, 1978, p. 208).

The methods for growing vines that were used or are still in use today could help us understand the exact meaning of *'md*. However, grapes were grown in different ways.

First of all, the trunk and branches of the vines may be left creeping along the ground, or they may be supported by a more developed method which is defined as trellis or pergolas. The latter is constructed in such a manner that the vine was trailed over a pole, a pillar or a stick. It must be noted that a vine is a plant whose stem requires support and which climbs by tendrils or twining. Since the branches of a vine grow very quickly and might reach a length of 1-4 meters, the trunk could possibly be unable to carry the heavy clusters of grapes, and because the branches of grapes can mature in the shade, the trunk must necessarily be supported on a pole. In general, vines in the ancient Near East are trailed on poles or trellis, much as they are in other parts of the world.

Arabic authorities describe methods for the growing of the vine. They mention that if the vine is supported by a pole the vineyard is then called *ma'rūš*, *'arīš* and *mu'arraš*. These terms which derive from the Arabic root *'rš* « to erect a trellis (for a grapevine) » mean « trellis for grapevines, pergola » (al-Muḫaṣṣaṣ, 11, 66f; Lane, p. 1999f). Meanwhile, the term *mismāk* « vine-stock » (root *smk* « to support ») which has the same meaning as *'md* « supporter, vine-stock » (*'md* « to support » – the vine) in ancient Yemen may be a good parallel for the interpretation of this term. Arabic authors state that every supporter or pole for a vine was called *mismāk* or *simāk* (pl. *sumuk*, al- Muḫaṣṣaṣ, 11, 67). However, the term *mismāk* with the meaning « vine-stock », which might be of Aramaic or Canaanite origin is still used in Palestine in the traditional method of growing the vine. According to this interpretation, it seems that the word *'md* in the inscriptions means not only « vine-stock » but also designates the vine which is supported with it and this is in addition to the common meaning « vineyard ». However, there is no representation of a whole tree of vine in the South Arabian reliefs. Only branches and leaves of the vine along with wine-clusters are found. These are typical ornaments in the South Arabian reliefs. Noteworthy is the representation of the vine and vineyards in the Assyrian reliefs (Bleibtreu, 1980, p. 131-38).

At any rate, the vines grown on poles are the *'md*-vineyards in ancient Yemen. This kind of vineyard seems to be the same vineyard occurring in the Qur'ān as follows: *ǧannātin ma'rūšātin wa-ġaira ma'rūšātin* « Gardens, with trellises and without » (Sure 6, 141). This method of cultivating vines is well known in the other parts of the Near East, both in antiquity and today.

A votive inscription from Maḥram Bilqīs (*CIAS*, 39.11/06, no. 6, see A.F.L. Beeston, *CIAS* II. 83f) demonstrates the occurrence of *'md*-vineyard with other plantations as follows:

4. *bdt / ḫmrhmw / ʾlmqh / stwfyn / bk*
5. *l / tbqlt / bqlw / bʾrḍhmw / ʾrḍ / b*
6. *ny / ʿšrm / ʿmdm / wʿlbm / wʾbwnm*

Translation

4. In gratitude because Almaqah granted them a safeguard
5. in all plantations which they carried out in their land, the land of Banū
6. *ʿšrm*, namely vineyards, *'ilb*-trees and *bān*-trees.

In addition to this inscription, there are several inscriptions that mention *'md*-vineyard in connection with the *'ilb*-tree « Zizyphus spina Christi » in a general context (*CIH* 610/3; *CIH* 611/5). The vineyards of Ma'rib are also mentioned in a Sabaic inscription as follows: *wybsw / 'mṭrn / whmhlt / kl / 'srr / w'kl' / mrb / wmwt / ḏbh / ''mdn / bn/ ṣm'm / wybs / ḏbn / 'b'rn* « And all rainy irrigated fields dried up and all Wādīs and pasture-grounds of Ma'rib suffered from drought and vineyards which were located in it died from thirst and wells dried up » (Ja 735/6-7, see Müller, 1988, p. 450-52).

A Sabaic inscription mentions the destruction of a vineyard probably in a military action in the territory of Nağrān, *wygbḏ[w / ... s]ṯy / ''lfm / ''mdm* « They ravaged ... sixty thousand grapevines » (Ja 577/14-15). Other inscriptions also inform us about the destruction of fields and vineyards in ancient Yemen (*Sab.Dic.*, 48). Such customs were carried out in military invasions, such as by a governor of the Egyptian Pharaoh Pepi I (24th century B.C.) who felled the vines in Palestine (Redford, 1993, p. 54), and similar actions seem to have continued in Arabia. The prophet Muḥammad, for example, ordered the destruction of the vineyards during the siege of aṭ-Ṭā'if (Ibn Hišām, vol. II, p. 483).

'nb

The vineyard *'nb* (pl. *''nb*) seems to be a general designation of « vineyard » in Sabaic (*Sab.Dic.*, 17). The word *'nb* is common Semitic and carries the meaning « grapes ».

In a Sabaic dedication inscription *''nb* are mentioned in the following context*: wl / s'dhmw / n'mtm / w'ṯmrm / 'dy / ''nbhmw* « And to grant them prosperity and a fruitful season from their vineyards » (*CIH* 342/9-12). *''nb* « vineyards » also occur in two dedication inscriptions from Maḥram Bilqīs (Ja 620/12; Ja 730/7).

We also have some information about the irrigation of such vineyards. A Sabaic inscription mentions [...]*ḫmst / ''nbm / mḏbn / ḏswmn* « [For the irrigation of] five vineyards (through the) canal Ḏū-Sawmān » (Gl 1442).

It is to be noted that vineyards in their varieties are the second most frequently attested term for fruit plantation after palmgroves (*'nḫl*) in ancient Yemen. Vineyards and palmgroves occur side by side in a Sabaic inscription (*'nḫl / w''nb, CIH* 604/2). These are also attested in the same order in the Qur'ān as follows*: wa min ṯamarāti n-naḫīli wal-'a'nābi tattaḫiḏūna minhu sakaran* « And of the fruits of the palms and the grapes, you obtain from them intoxicants » (Sura, 16, 67). It may be assumed that the people to whom this verse was addressed were the people of Yemen. This can be maintained not only because the palm and the wine grapes in Arabia are mostly planted in relation to each other in Yemen, but also because the oldest indication for making wine from these two fruits in Arabia is also in Yemen.

ḥbl

This kind of vineyard seems to be the one planted on terraces. *ḥbl* is always attested in Sabaic inscriptions in pl. *ḥblt*. The word *ḥabala* occurs as a kind of grape in aṭ-Ṭā'if. However, the word *ḥbl* itself means « a grapevine, a stock of a grapevine » (Lane, p. 505). Furthermore, the word *ḥabala* (pl. *ḥabalāt*) is registered to be of a Yemeni origin and is given the meaning

« a grapevine » (Al-Selwi, 1987, p. 66-67). Authorities have suggested that the word *ḥbl* means « terrace field, terraced vineyard » (*Sab.Dic.*, 65). Other scholars have proposed that this word means only « a grapevine » (*SEG* VII, 33; Al-Selwi, 1987, p. 67). However, according to several examples it seems that the word *ḥbl* is more likely to mean « a terraced vineyard ».

In a Sabaic votive inscription the term *ḥblt* occurs as follows: *wlwfyhmw / wlḫmrhmw / fqlm / n'dm / 'dy / ḥblthmw / w'brthmw* « To save and to grant them luxuriant crops from their vineyards and Wādī-side fields » (*CIH* 343/4-5). One Sabaic inscription provides an indication for a « decease of vineyards » (*qlmt / ḥb[l]tn*, E 24). Another Sabaic inscription informs us about « A bad drought which affected their vineyards and vines » (*ḫybt / nkrw / b''nbhmw / wḥblthmw*, Gl 1441/3). In this case it is obvious that *ḥblt* means « vine ». A further Sabaic inscription gives information about ravaging a vineyard as follows: *wgbdw / kl / ḥblthw* « They ravaged their vineyards » (*CIH* 308/ 23; see also *CIH* 308 bis/17).

In the agricultural terms of ancient Yemen the term *grbt* « lay out fields in terraces » (*Sab.Dic.*, 50) is of importance. It has continued to be used throughout the ages up to today, and one kind of these *ǧirab* (sg. *ǧirba*) is described as *ḏī al-a'mād*. This designation for this kind of *ǧirba* makes it clear that it is a vineyard (al-Iryānī, *al-Mu'ǧam al-yamanī*, 133).

Vineyards were usually combined with wine-presses for preparing wine from grapes. Wine-presses in vineyards have been found in Palestine from the third millennium B.C. (Goor & Nurock, 1968, p. 18-45). However, there is no available data about this in ancient Yemen, and should be investigated. In a Sabaic inscription the word *mwht* may have the meaning of a « wine-press » as it has been suggested by the *Sab.Dic.*, 159. This wine-press is mentioned in relation to a vineyard: *'rḍtn / w'nḫln / w''nbn / wmwhtn* « The land, the palm groves, the vineyards and the wine-press » (*CIH* 604/5; Ghūl, 1993, p. 69). Al-Hamdānī and other Arabic authors mention that the pre-Islamic poet al-A'šā had his own wine-press in Aṯāfit in Yemen (Al-Hamdānī, *Ṣifat*, 66).

Wine

The people of ancient Yemen used wine grapes for eating and making raisins (Maraqten, 1993). By pressing them they yielded juice which could be drunk or fermented to make wine, a beverage which seems to have been widespread in pre-Islamic Yemen. They also produced wine not only for drinking but also for exporting. It appears that there were centers for producing wine and that Šibām/Kawkabān was one of these centers. The red wine of Šibām is mentioned in addition to the red wine of 'Āna by the pre-Islamic poet Imru' al-Qays (*Dīwān Imri' al-Qays*, 163). 'Āna is located on the Euphrates and was a famous place for wine in antiquity and continued in Islam.

In ancient South Arabia, North Arabia and other parts of the ancient Near East, wine was produced from dates, wine grapes, honey and cereals (Sadan, 1978, 997f; Grohmann, 1922, p. 234-38). Pliny and Strabo write that Arabs used to produce wine from dates (Strabo XVI, 4.25; Pliny VI, 32).

According to Diodorus, Osiris had discovered wine near Nysa in *Arabia Felix* (Diodorus I, 15; III, 64, 66). Moreover, Dionysus was reared in Nysa, where he discovered wine and « taught mankind how to cultivate the vine » (Diodorus IV, 2). However, the location of Nysa is still ambiguous.

South Arabs produced their drinks from different sources such as grapes, cereals, dates and honey. However, Strabo states that in *Arabia Felix* « The greater part of their wine is made from the palm » (Strabo XVI, 4.25). However, one old tradition of making wine and beer continued in the modern period (Grohmann, 1933, 51f). Homemade wine is still produced today secretly or for the black market. According to the *Periplus*, wine was produced in large quantities in Southern Arabia (Casson, 1989, p. 61, § 17).

We do not have information about methods of making wine in ancient Yemen, but they may have used the same steps as in the other parts of the ancient Near East. These are: pressing, fermenting, filtration, filling, and then storage and transport.

There is no solid information about wine vessels in ancient Yemen. The identification of wine vessels from archaeological discoveries needs more research, and the inscriptions give us only a few facts. But Arabic sources provide many terms for wine vessels, and some of them were used in pre-Islamic Arabia. The most common vessels for preparing, storing and transporting wine are jars, bottles, wine-casks and wine-skins (*ziqq*, *saqā'* etc., Sabaic, *sqy* *Sab.Dic.*, 128; *saqā'* is usually a « water-skin »: see also Sabaic *mqdḥ* « cup, vessel for offerings », *Sab.Dic.*, 103). These wine-skins were used all over Arabia. There were several terms for different kinds of wine-skins.

There were vessels which were made out of the trunks of palm trees and were used for preparing date-wine in East and Central Arabia like palm-trunks (*naqīr*) « tiny spot on a date pit » (Wensinck, 6, p. 533). The well-known *faṣī*-wine in Yaṯrib and East Arabia was fermented in *mafāḍiḫ* « wine vessels » (sg. *mafḍaḫ*, Wensinck, 5, p. 156). The *faḍīḫ*, which was named after these vessels and was made from dates, continued to be drunk in Zabīd in Islamic Yemen (Varisco, 1994, p. 158). In addition to this, there were baskets (*muzaffat*, Wensinck, 2, p. 337) which were made of palm leaves and coated inside with asphalt to protect the liquid and used in Central and East Arabia. These vessels may also have been used in Yemen.

Wine filters were also used. In Arabic, the words *miṣfāh* and *rāwūq* refer to wine filters. *miṣalla* and *misḫala* « filter, wine strainer » are recorded to be of Yemeni origin (*al-Muḫaṣṣaṣ*, 11, 89). The people used mostly cups, bowls and goblets to drink wine. Ibn Sīda registered more than fifty wine vessels in Arabic (*al-Muḫaṣṣaṣ*, 11, 82-87).

The people of South Arabia distinguished between several kinds of wine by different names. However, the distinction between the *mizr* made from date or that *mizr* which was made from cereals is not clear, unless we accept that *mizr* was used for all fermented beverages. In most modern languages, wines and fruit wines are distinguished from beer and other drinks made from cereals, and the processes differ quite considerably, as do the tastes of the products. A common term for all fermented drinks in pre-Islamic Arabia and still used today is the word *ḫamr*, which is usually translated as « wine ». The term wine is used here in this sense.

We have some data about wine in South Arabic from the following inscriptions:

1. *CIH* 540

45. ... / *w*
46. *ṯlṯy / w'rb' / m't*
47. *m / 'blm / sqym /*
48. *ġrbbm / wfṣym /*
49. *wṯty / m'tn /*
50. *blm / mzrm / ḏtm*
51. *rm...*

91. ...*ws*
92. *ṯ / mʾtm / ʾʾbl*
93. *m / sqym / ġrbb*
94. *m / wfṣym...*

45. and
46. four hundred and thirty
47. camel-loads wineskins
48. of *ġirbīb*-wine and *faṣy*-wine.
49. Two hundred
50. camel-loads of *mizr*-wine from
51. date...

91. ... and six
92. hundred camel-loads
93. wine-skins *ġirbīb*-wine
94. and *faṣy*-wine...

2. *CIH* 541

127. *wṯlṯ / mʾtm / ʾʾblm /*
128. *sqym / ġrbbm / wfṣym*
129. *wʾḥd / ʿšr / ʾʾlfm / ʾl*
130. *ḥlb / sqym / ḏtmrm*

127. and three hundred camel-loads
128. wine-skins of *ġirbīb*-wine and *faṣy* -wine
129. and eleven thousand
130. (*ḥalab*-wine ?), a drink of dates

The wine of Yemen was designated by pre-Islamic poets as *ar-rāḥ al-yamānī*. This is mentioned by the pre-Islamic poet Imru' al-Qays (al-Hamdānī, *Ṣifat*, 198). Other terms for the wine of Yemen are to be found in Arabic sources and South Arabian inscriptions. The most important data about wine in these inscriptions are gained from the two inscriptions mentioned above (*CIH* 540, 541), which refer to the reconstruction of the dam of Ma'rib. After mentioning the food, they then record the different kinds of drinks. The following is a discussion of the different beverage drinks in ancient Yemen.

1. *mzr/mizr*. It is cited in South Arabian inscriptions (*CIH* 540/50; ʿAbdallāh, 1988, p. 81-100). The Arabic Classical authors considered this word to be a Yemeni word (Al-Selwi, 1987, p. 198). These authors agree that *mizr* is a kind of drink produced from cereals: dura, corn or barley often mixed with honey (Al-Selwi, 1987, p. 198). In a Sabaic inscription « *mzr* of dates » (*mzr ḏtmrm*) is attested (*CIH* 540/50). Obviously, *mizr* was a favorite drink; it has been described by Arab authors to be the wine itself (*wal-mizr huwa l-ḫamr*). The prophet Muḥammad said: « Allah prohibited *al-ḫamr* (wine) *wal-maysir* (gambling) *wal-mizr* for my community » (Wensinck, 6, p. 206). *mizr* along with *bitʿ* are considered to be national drinks in Yemen. They continued to be consumed in the Islamic period. It is interesting that we find *mizr* in Egypt in the Islamic period (Ibn al-Baiṭār, IV, p. 155). However, Ibn al-Baiṭār describes *mizr*

mizr is primarily considered to be a kind of beer. It was also used at the same time for different kinds of beer and wine.

2. *fṣym*: It is a kind of raisin wine in Sabaic (*CIH* 540/48, 94; *CIH* 541/128).

3. *ḫlb*: It is interpreted to be *šarāb at-tamr* « date drink » (*Lisān*, article *ḫlb*). *ḫlb* may be found in a Sabaic inscription (*CIH* 541/130). *ḫlb* is also considered to be a « measure of volume » in the *Sab.Dic.*, 67.

4. *ġrbbm*: *ġirbīb* is a kind of red or dark [black] wine prepared from black grapes. Its name is based on its color *ġirbīb* « black ». *ġirbīb* is a kind of high quality black grape grown in aṭ-Ṭā'if; this is mentioned by Arabic authors (*Lisān*, article *ġrb*). It is also found in Sabaic inscriptions (*CIH* 540/48, 93; *CIH* 541/128).

5. *bit'*: It is a drink from Yemen made from honey (Al-Selwi, 1987, p. 40). The prophet Muḥammad was told by somebody from Yemen: «... There is a drink in our land made from honey called *bit'* ». This drink continued to be drunk not only in Yemen but also in Egypt (Ibn Qutaiba, p. 182).

6. *ġubayrā'*: This is also a drink made from wheat or barley, and it is mentioned in a Ḥadīṯ as the following: « Some people from Yemen came to the prophet Muḥammad ... and asked him about a drink made from wheat or barley ... called al-*ġubayrā'* » (*Lisān* article *ġbr*). There are also other drinks which were known in pre-Islamic Arabia and seem to have been connected to Yemen such as *sukruka* or *sukurka* (or *suqurqa'*) which is noted by Arab authors to be an Ethiopian drink made from dura. It is also described as *ġubayrā'* itself (*Lisān*, article *skr*).

7. *ṣa'f*: It is a wine used in Yemen; it is prepared from grapes and sometimes mixed with honey and also described as a fermented drink made from honey (Al-Selwi, 1987, p. 133). The word *ṣā'f* means « new wine » in Ethiopian (Leslau, 1991, p. 543). A person who is drunk through *ṣa'f* is described to be *ṣa'fān* just like *sakrān* « drunk ».

8. *ḫamr*: This word means « wine grapes, wine ». It is a general word in Arabic for all alcoholic drinks. (Al-Selwi, 1987, p. 80). It is a common West Semitic word for wine and originally was used only for red wine. Al-Hamdānī states two places for producing wine: Wādī Ḍahr (*ḫamr ḍahr*) and Iāt (*ḫamr ṭāt*) near Ḏamār (Al- Hamdānī, – *Ṣifat*, 129).

9. *myṯ*: There are also other words in South Arabic inscriptions which could have the meaning « wine » like *myṯ* (*Sab.Dic.*, 89).

Little is known about daily life from South Arabian inscriptions and especially about foods and drinks. However, drinking wine was widespread there. The fact that there are several terms for wine in South Arabian inscriptions, or registered in Arabic sources to be of Yemeni origin, is an indication that wine was an important part of the daily life and culture of pre-Islamic South Arabia.

We do not know about the daily life of taverns in South Arabia from the inscriptions. But the daily life of the taverns in pre-Islamic Arabia at the advent of Islam is described in detail in the wine poems of pre-Islamic poetry (al-Asad, 1988, p. 64). One of the most important features of the drinking scenes in the ancient Near East are the presentations of singing, dancing – for the most part girls – and the serving of drinks, beer or wine. Mostly females served in the taverns. However, we are informed about the singing girls (*qiyān, qaināt*, sg. *qaina*); mostly only two who danced, sang and served wine in these bars are mentioned.

Arabic sources mention that the Ḥimyarite king ʿAmr b. ʿĀmir Muzaiqiyyā used to go to some of his gardens accompanied by his two singing-girls (*qaynatān*) (*at-Tīǧān*, 276). These sources add that during his reign the famous dam of Mārib was destroyed. Moreover, these sources claim that the Ḥimyarite king ʿAmr b. Ḏū al-Adʿār used to drink wine in the company of the daughters of the kings of Ḥimyar and had sexual intercourse with them. This king was invited to a drink by Bilqīs before she was the queen of Saba; she killed him when he was drunk (*at-Tīǧān*, 159).

Wine banquets with singing-girls (*qiyān*) are recorded by Arab authors. Moreover, these authors mention many stories about wine drinking among pre-Islamic Arabs (al-Asad, 1988, p. 54-61). Al-Hamdānī mentions singing-girls from the time of the ancient Arab tribe ʿĀd (al-Iklīl, VIII, p. 215-17). According to Arabic traditions, this ancient tribe lived immediately after Noah, in the desert al-Aḥqāf. A good example for such stories is the story of the delegation of ʿĀd which had been sent to Mecca. It is mentioned by several Arabic authors and is described by aṭ-Ṭabarī as follows: « When the ʿĀd delegation stopped off at the home of Muʿāwiya b. Bakr, they remained with him for a month, drinking wine while the two singing-girls (the two were called *al-ǧaradatān* "two locusts") of Muʿāwiya b. Bakr sang for them » (aṭ-Ṭabarī, I, 219f).

Unfortunately, in Arabia we do not have drinking scenes like those of Mesopotamia, Syria or Egypt. Nevertheless, we have a banquet scene from South Arabia in a Sabaic funeral stele on which a Sabaic inscription is engraved on its upper part (*CIH* 445) and the first register shows a scene of singing-girls and drinking wine (Grohmann, 1963, p. 225, Pl. XVII,1).

Greek and Roman wine banquets have been the subject of intensive studies, yet discussions on this subject in the ancient Near East did not accommodate pre-Islamic Arabia. Ritual banquets in ancient South Arabia have been studied by J. Ryckmans (1973) and A. Lundin (1990). Meanwhile, good data about banquets is available from the ancient Near East (Collon, 1992, p. 23-30).

We do not have accurate information about sacral wine banquets in South Arabia. The representations of wine drinking on some South Arabian stele cannot be proved to be sacral scenes. There is no solid data about a wine deity like Dionysus of the Hellenistic world in South Arabia. Nevertheless, there are some indications that the Sabaic deity Almaqah took the role of Dionysus (Garbini, 1973, p. 15-22), a role which is also played by the Nabataean god Ḏū aš-Šarā. Bacchic scenes are found in South Arabian art (Costa, 1987, p. 479-84). Branches of vine and wine-cluster build one of the characteristics of the art in ancient Yemen.

Meanwhile, wine sacrifice is attested in South Arabia. One of the most important features are libation altars such as *mslm* (*Sab.Dic.*, 126). Libation sacrifice was, however, practiced both in North and South Arabia (Henninger, 1981, p. 221-23). Noteworthy is the recently discovered Palmyrene inscription inscribed on an amphora and read by I.I. Shifman as *ḥnk yyn* « dedication of wine » or *nʿkyʾ* (cited in Sedov, 1992, p. 118). This inscription, which is written in cursive

Palmyrene script, is more likely to be read as *ḥnkt'* and translated as « dedication (libation) ». This word is attested in the Palmyrene inscriptions (*DNWSI*, 388).

Some data about wine trade in Southern Arabia may be gained from the *Periplus*. Syrian wine was imported by South Arabia, especially the Laodicean (Latakia) wine (Casson, 1989, p. 20, 113, § 6: 2.32-33). Wines of Syria were especially of excellent quality (Lutz, 1922, 22f). Yet it seems that South Arabia did not import a lot of wine because they produced it themselves as it is stated in the *Periplus*. The merchants were advised to unload only little wine in Arabia because they had much of it (Casson, 1989, p. 61, § 17, 65, 154, 189, § 24: 8.6). Meanwhile, South Arabia was not only a place for producing wine but also for exporting it. Wine of Arabia was exported to Barygaza in India (Casson, 1989, p. 21, 81, § 49) and was most likely picked up in Muza (Casson, 1989, p. 21, 207).

There were several designations for wine sellers or wine makers in pre-Islamic Arabia, such as *sakkār* and *ḫammār*. The wine-merchants in Yemen are called *battā'*, *i.e.* the one who sells bit' (*al-Muḫaṣṣaṣ*, 11, 81) and *mazzār*, *i.e.* the *mizr*-merchant (Nöldeke, 1910, p. 57).

Apparently, the price of imported wine was more expensive than the locally produced wine. We do not have accurate data about wineshops and taverns in ancient Yemen and the prices at which they were fixed. Nevertheless, some information may be obtained from the so-called « rules of the Ḥimyarites », where the governor of the city and his assistants were engaged to supervise the selling and the prices of bread, wine and oil (Pigulewskaja, 1969, 204f).

Abbreviation and bibliography

ABADY: *Archäologische Berichte aus dem Yemen*, ed. by J. Schmidt, 1991.

CAD: Chicago Assyrian Dictionary.

CIH: Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum, IV.

DNWSI: J. HOFTIJZER & K. JONGELING, 1995, *Dictionary of the North-West Semitic Inscriptions*, II vols., Leiden.

EI: *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new edition.

Ja: Jamme

Lisān: Ibn Manẓūr, Muḥammad b. Mukarram b. 'Alī, *Lisān al-'arab*, 15 vols., Beirut, 1955-66.

PSAS: Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies.

RES: Répertoire d'Épigraphie Sémitique, Paris, 1914.

Sab.Dic: A.F.L. BEESTON, M.A. GHUL, W.W. MÜLLER & J. RYCKMANS, 1982, *Sabaic Dictionary*, Louvain-la-Neuve/Beirut.

al-Muḫaṣṣaṣ: dictionary by Ibn Sīdah (also named Ibn Sīduh, died in 1066 A.D.); entry: *Bāb al-ḫamr*.

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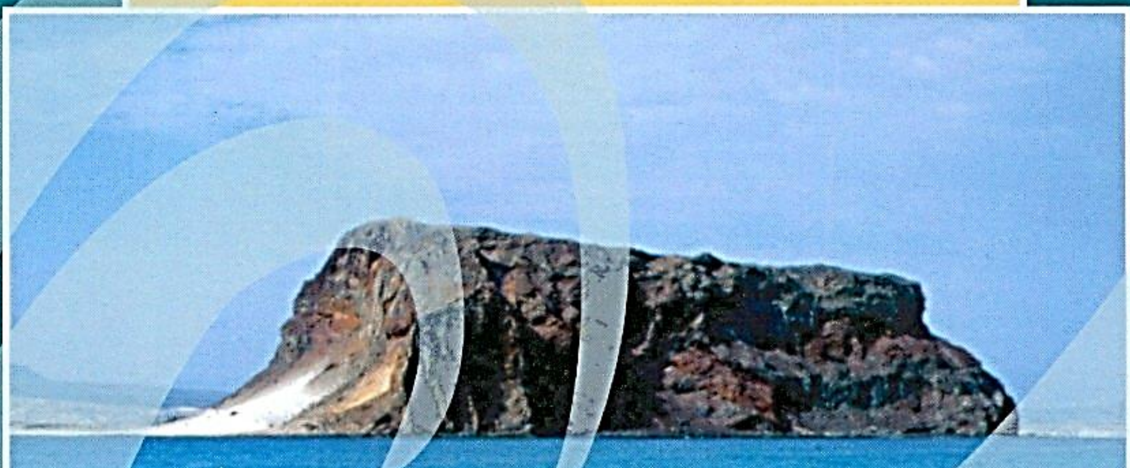
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